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Foxconn's Factory, Producing iPhone 5's, Erupts in a Riot

Monday, September 24, 2012

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

(New York) Today, China Labor Watch (CLW) released its statement on the riot in Foxconn's Taiyuan factory.

Chinese media has reported that on the night of September 23, Foxconn's Taiyuan factory erupted in a riot involving over 2000 workers that has led to the injury of 40 people. The initial trigger of the incident involves a conflict between some guards and a worker. The guards reportedly dragged the worker into a van and began beating him. This led to the involvement of other workers, quickly devolving into a large-scale group fight between workers and guards. By the end of the night, the guards had ran away.

But the roots causes of this incident demand attention. Foxconn factories, which produce many of Apple's products, have a history of maintaining militaristic management practices as well as putting an inordinate amount of stress on workers. Coming from a variety of places throughout China, workers are required to work 10-hour day and night shifts with little rest, receiving low wages, and all the while suffering very strict factory rules on behavior and suffering the verbal and physical abuse of guards. Given such stress, the workers are on edge, and incidents like the one yesterday are more likely to occur. This is especially true of a time in which Apple has given Foxconn large orders for new products, like the iPhone 5.

CLW doesn't know the exact products manufactured by workers involved in this incident, but this Taiyuan factory is currently producing Apple's iPhone 5's. We can thus conclude that the pressure on workers at this factory must be greater than usual.

These workers must be treated with respect. And both Apple and Foxconn, with billions of dollars in profits every year, have both a legal and ethical obligation to uphold the rights of these workers.

When Apple puts in orders with Foxconn for the new iPhone, it never considers the human rights of the workers, nor the production capacity of its factories. Rather, it is only concerned with sales revenues, PR, customers----its own interests. Just as in the case of the riot taking place in Foxconn's Taiyuan factory, a large number of workers are transferred to the factory at one time to produce the new iPhone. This large influx combined with the militaristic management at the factory results in tremendous pressure on the workers, and this may have been a root cause of the conflict. This sort of circumstance is bound to lead to the eruption of certain issues in other factories of Foxconn sooner or later.

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